

GOOD-BYE TO LITTLE "YUM-YUM" AND HER GORGEOUS KIMONA

Shirtwaist and Skirt of Occident Threatens Complete Uglification of Land of the Cherry Blossom.

IS the "uglification" of Japan about to be completed?

Thirty years after the first effort to make European dress the costume of the country for women as well as men, a movement which lasted three years to a violent reaction, it is again decreed that the kimono of old Japan must be discarded.

Somehow, it seems like the obliteration of a nationality to think of the slant-eyed beauties of Nippon exchanging their polite greetings at the Feast of the Cherry Blossoms or under the blossoming mistaria in shirtwaists or blouses or middies and the unbeautiful skirt of western civilization.

Something is to be taken from the glamour of the orient if the beautifully brocaded garments so daintily and becomingly worn by the daughters of the Samurai is to disappear. Even the cheap cotton kimono of the coolie class seems to suggest the art which is so large a part of the Japanese daily life.

Would alluring little Cho Cho San have radiated the charm which enticed the American, Pinkerton, from standards taught and absorbed in his boyhood and

ern clothes was dated November 1, 1886, when an edict was published that government officials should wear European dress on duty. Cognizant change, wives and daughters of the nobility of Japan many months before ordered European street and evening gowns from Berlin and Paris establishments. And at an imperial ball on the date named they presented themselves for the first time in western garments.

From the first the innovation was unpopular even with those who led the revolution. The average Japanese woman was almost the physical equal of her mate. Her clothing, free of restriction, had helped much in this result. But with corsets and with tight shoes replacing the sandals of other days came the evils which follow the allegiance to "style."

In 1889 the reaction came, and it was as complete as it was sudden. Leaders in official and civilian life appeared in the silken kimonos of their mothers and grandmothers. And Japan was once more Japan. In this period Japan was

those who lived at court, embroidered lavishly with the imperial design of white chrysanthemums. The underlying folds were of richest silks and linens. And, by the way, speaking of folds, the overlapping must be from left to right to be correct. From right to left betrays intolerable ignorance.

Then the obi. It is to the Japanese costume what jeweled stomachers are to western dowagers. Its cost was prohibited only by the family income. Starting as a utilitarian device to belt in the kimonos with a width of a few inches it developed to a full foot and a half before artists found sufficient room to embellish it with silken and gold threaded figures sufficient to satisfy milady.

The Japanese find their art in nature. To them flowers are to be worshiped and loved. Hence it is not strange fashion decreed that costumes must follow the calendar of blossoms, and to be really correct it was necessary that one have a broadened reproduction of each of nature's blooms to be worn during the corresponding blossoming time.

And the garments carried significance other than betokening wealth and station. From the earliest period when babies ceased to be just babies and were classified as to sex, the soberer shades of solid blues and grays and browns proclaimed the future warrior, while the rioting colors liberally splashed with red indexed the wearer as a little maiden.

Through the years to a climax of gay hues and embroidered brave blossoms the Japanese girl laughs her way until the apex of activity and maturity are reached and then the color scheme melts into quieter combinations until in old age she becomes a gray moth or a plain colored sparrow.

And now it is all to disappear. The "Three little maids from school" are to be transformed into three debutantes from a finishing institution, and "Yum Yum" is to look precisely like her American sister who wants the ballot and who



youth, had she worn the garments of the occident?

True, the romance faded, Pinkerton returned to the states and married a misunderstanding wife who, in trying to be kind to the tiny Japanese girl, blundered so frightfully that Cho Cho San saw only a hair-kari avenue of escape.

But it is not the tragic disaster at the end which made the story equally a classic with Pierre Loti's earlier "Madame Chrysanthemum." It is the picturesque of the woman-child to whom love came as the sun comes to kiss the cherry blossoms. It is the mental conception of her which needs no artist's visualization in her gorgeously colored costume awaiting the return of her heart's overlord to the tiny house where locks were only to keep out those who were out, and in him she wanted in.

The wife of Dr. Tsuneko Iriaw, a physician of Tokyo, head of the movement for the remodeling of the kimono to a garment which will be less expensive and not so hampering of physical movement, has enlisted the co-operation of hundreds of her countrywomen. Prizes have been offered for the best design submitted for a substitute garment, and apparently the handwriting is all over the wall.

The first attempt to replace the traditional costume of the country with western

in the making. It was not until the defeat of Russia several years later that the nation really took its place among the powers of the world.

Following the country's victory European capitals and American centers began to see more of the upper classes of Nippon. In Paris, in London, in Vienna, in Washington, Japanese women wore the modes of the moment. Artists agreed that the costumes never looked right, the picture always was lacking in the vitality of naturalness.

But your Japanese is first of all adaptable, and he had heard early the injunction concerning one's conduct when in Rome. Nevertheless, when the tour was completed, when the official residence abroad was terminated and they went back to castles and town houses where their hearts had always been, the

brocade and plain silk and crepe and linen sellers were called in, artists were employed to fashion the designs to be embroidered and a wardrobe of kimonos replaced the discarded trunks of western accumulations.

There may be something in the contention of the reformers that kimonos are too expensive. However, consider

the Japanese husband. Travelers have written down that \$200 may easily represent the cost of an average middle class outfit, including the obi, which is the piece de resistance and may attain any price. Also they have chronicled that the head of the family glories in the bedecked appearance of his womenfolk and will himself go shabbily attired that they be not denied the smallest detail to perfect the desired ensemble.

The origin of the kimono is enveloped in antiquity. The garment is believed to have come from Korea when artists from that country brought silk and embroidery to Japan.

In the days of the shogunate, when the castles of the daimos were alive with entertainment without cessation except

to visit former guests who turn at hospitality required acceptance of invitations, the wardrobe of a great lady of Japan was extensive.

Be it known that the leaders of fashion in those days did not descend to the economy of a thickly padded garment when winter drove autumn to the yesterdays. Indeed not, so to be in good form they erased the physical form by meeting the requirements of varying temperatures with a plurality of kimonos.

It was not unusual that the great dame should encumber herself in twenty-five separate garments of harmonizing colors, each showing enough for enumeration at the neck, the sleeves and at the bottom. The distinction lay in getting the most on, rather than the opposite occidental aim to get the most off.

The outer robe was resplendent in its gorgeousness. Purple was the color for

twiddles her fingers at the ancient philosophy which concedes the superiority of man.

Of course there is a reason. It is for the benefit of the poorer classes. The wives of the rich have concluded that the clothes of the less fortunate are costing them too much and have set out to remedy the economic defect. That sounds more occidental than oriental.

It is set forth in the literature of the reform that eight rolls of cloth are needed for a winter's wardrobe. The cost amounts to one-third the average income in the classes to be benefited. The press agent for the propagandists evidently had a passion for statistics, for it is officially stated that to make up the material 330 feet of thread is needed and 30,000 stitches are required.

The Japanese women fostering the movement consider these 30,000 stitches a waste of energy. It is said that in some households fashioning kimonos and other articles of wearing apparel for the family occupies the womenfolk nearly the entire year. Just why is not made clear, but the statement is made that this sewing is not done on machines but entirely by hand.

And so prizes have been offered with competition open to anyone in the empire for simplified garments for all occasions. There is diplomacy in this. The edict of 1886 was an imperial order. The people resented the forced change and the later policy permitted its abandonment.

But a reform that proceeds out of the people themselves rarely provokes revolt. If the men and women and boys and girls of Japan show by submitting designs in the contests that they recognize a need for a change, the overturning of tradition will be accomplished without protest.

Good-bye Cho Cho San.
Farewell Yum Yum.
Adieu old Japan.
Enter "uglification."